INTRODUCTION TO DOCUMENTATION (COLED-V)

American presence in South Vietnam rapidly expanded in 1965. So did the need for an adequate inventory of combat materiel shipped to and used in that country.

Some military personnel remembered how after the Normandy landings in 1944, ammunition and other vital materiel were in short supply largely due, they said, to an inadequate reporting and planning system. Then the amount of ammunition used and required and in what condition was little more than educated guess work. Because Vietnam was a counterinsurgency war planning was crucial, requiring data which answered the knotty questions about how much ammunition was being consumed and in what conditions and how much materiel was going to be required. To develop these answers, the United States Army Combat Development Command(CDC) developed the data base, Combat Operations Loss and Expenditure Data-Vietnam (COLED-V) in 1966.

CDC perceived that the war called for a data base to be used by the Army the Army combat units to forecast the loss and expenditure of its equipment and ammunition. There were data available from other wars but they had been conventional ones. The planners of COLED-V wanted combat loss data to relate to the conditions under which the losses occurred. Further, combat consumption data would have to include elements relating to the area of operations, type of war, and intensity of combat. The Vice Chief of Staff was convinced that "gathering information in Vietnam will produce an acceptable and valid Data Bank [sic] that can be used for revising or substantiating rates of losses and expenditures for forecasting materiel and ammunition requirements in counterinsurgency type of war."[1]

Containing data on U.S. Army troops only, the COLED-V project began to input 7000 records per month in 1966. That soon was surpassed, for soon as many as 30,000 per month were being keyed into the system. So much data were being added to COLED-V that the program could not accommodate it. Between 1966-1969, the war intensified and the American involvement along with it. Yet after the TET offensive in 1968, changes in missions, and terrain and target analyses required revisions in the collection parameters. Weather conditions had not been among the data elements. Now they were. The effects of day light or darkness on combat consumption were now included as crucial data elements.

A seven man team, stationed at the COLED-V data collection center in Vietnam, began processing the information as it was fed to

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[1] Research Analysis Corporation, "RAC Study 009.402, COLED-V," Project Advisory Group Meeting, 8 August 1969, p. vi.

them. In addition, the team was responsible for reviewing reports, extracting information, editing, and verifying information. They visited Army units, assisted in monitoring the reporting system, and provided COLED-V feedback data to major commands in Vietnam. After collected, the data were cross-checked with that of the Army Materiel Command (AMC). A contractor, in this case, Research Analysis Corporation, reduced the data and processed it into its final form. A generous amount of information was provided that proved to be the backbone for statistical tables on rounds of ammunition expended per weapon per day, expenditures versus losses, and expenditures by mission.

Heretofore, predictions of consumption had been based upon the amount issued. Allocation of this type could result in an uneven distribution of materiel. Since COLED-V depended upon data taken from expenditure results and the conditions under which the consumption took place, the thinking was that predictions as to where materiel should go would be more logical. If the nature of the war changed or if there were to be a phase out of Army troops, the COLED-V data could be used to determine how much materiel was, "in the pipeline". If a phase down occurred, this materiel could quickly be transported to theater depots for storage or shipment elsewhere.

The year before COLED-V was transferred, the Frankfort Arsenal was using the information to help predict ammunition consumption for their purposes.

The COLED-V project was transferred to the U.S.Army Depot Systems Command (HCDESCOM) in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, in 1970.

Documentation Package prepared by Michael T. Meier, Machine-readable Branch (NNSR), National Archives and Records Administration, January 1988.